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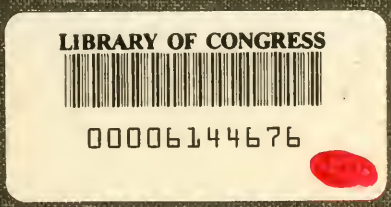

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# MESSRS. COBDEN AND BRIGHT ON THE AMERICAN QUESTION.

*Letter from Mr. Cobden, and Speech of Mr. Bright, on the American Question, at the banquet given to the latter at Rochdale on the evening of Dec. 4th*, 1861.

## MR. COBDEN'S LETTER.

"Midhurst, Dec. 2d, 1861.

"Dear Sir,—I need not assure you with what pleasure I should accept your invitation to be present at the entertainment which is to be offered by his neighbors to my friend, Mr. Bright. It tempts me sorely, and yet I will not break the rule by which I have prohibited myself from attending any public meeting this winter, with the view of husbanding my health for the labors of the coming session.

"The circumstances of the present moment make me regret my inability to meet my constituents. I should have been glad to have expressed my views on the public questions of the day, especially in reference to our relations with the United States, to which a recent event has given a sudden importance. I allude, of course, to the capture of Messrs. Slidell and Mason, on board a British steamer. On this subject I should have urged the propriety of suspending a final judgment until we had had time to hear whether the American Government had authorized this act of their naval officer, and if so, on what ground they justified the proceeding.

"I have seen with some surprise the assumption in certain quarters that from the moment when our legal authorities have given their opinion on the point at issue, the question is settled,

and that we have only to proceed to enforce their award. It is forgotten that the matter in dispute must be decided not by British but by international law, and that if the President's Government should assume the responsibility of the act of their naval officer, they will claim for the reasoning and the precedents urged by their legal advisers at Washington, the same consideration which they are bound to give to the arguments of the law officers of the British Crown. To refuse this would be to deny that equality before the law which is the rule of all civilized states, and to arrogate for ourselves, as interested parties, arbitrary and dictatorial powers. Had I been able to meet my constituents, I should have in their name, and with I know their full concurrence, repudiated the language of those public writers who, without waiting till both parties have had a hearing, have given utterance to threats, which, if they are to be supposed to emanate from the British people, must render compliance on the part of the American Government difficult, if not impossible.

"Whatever be the issue of the legal controversy, this is a question which we cannot hope to bring to a more satisfactory issue by an appeal to arms. We endeavored to impose our laws, by force, on the Americans when they were three millions of colonists, and we know the result. Again, in 1812, when we were belligerents, and the United States, with eight millions of people, were neutral, and after we had for years subjected their vessels to search and seizure—which will now probably be adduced as precedents to justify the recent proceedings on their part—a war broke out on this very question of belligerent rights at sea, which, after two years of mutual slaughter and pillage, was terminated by a treaty of peace in which, by tacit agreement, no allusion was made to the original cause of the war. With these examples, can we reasonably hope by force of arms to compel the twenty millions of Americans who are now united under the Federal Government to accept our exclusive interpretation of the law of nations?

"Besides, the mere settlement of the question of the *Trent* does not dispose of our difficulties and dangers. We require a complete revision of the international maritime code, with a view to its simplification, and to bring it into harmony with the

altered circumstances of the age; and to this, it must in justice be admitted, the Americans have not been the obstacle. More than five years ago the government of Washington proposed to the European powers to exempt private property at sea from capture by armed vessels of every kind—a proposal which, in his message to Congress, President Pierce stated had been favorably received by Russia and France, but which was rejected by our government, acting in opposition to the unanimous opinion of the commercial bodies of this country. Subsequently, Mr. Buchanan's government enlarged this offer by proposing to abolish blockades so far as purely mercantile ports were concerned, but again this met with no favor from our government. The details of this plan are but imperfectly known, as no official documents have been given to the British public. But after perusing the statement made by our foreign minister in the House of Commons, on the 18th February last, the painful impression is left on my mind that had this offer of the United States Government, instead of being opposed, been promptly and frankly accepted by England, our commerce with the southern ports of that country might have at this moment been uninterrupted, and Lancashire would hardly have felt any inconvenience from the civil war in America. I was absent from Parliament when these great questions were incidentally referred to, for all serious discussion on the subject seems to have been discouraged by the government; but I think I shall be able to show, on a future occasion, that no other country is interested to half the extent of England in carrying out these propositions of the United States Government. I would go a step further, and exempt from visitation, search, and obstruction of every kind, all neutral merchant ships on the ocean or open sea, in time of war as well as in time of peace. The commerce of the world has become too vast, and its movements too rapid, to permit of merchant vessels of all nations being everywhere liable to search and detention, merely because two powers in some quarter of the globe choose to be at war. This state of things might have been endurable some centuries ago, when war was regarded as the normal state of society, and when the neutrality of a great power was almost unknown, but it is utterly intolerable in an age of steam navigation and free trade. But let it

not be forgotten by the British public, in the present moment of irritation, that England has always been, and still is, the great obstacle to a liberal and humane modification of the maritime law of nations in the interest of neutrals, and that her assent alone is wanting to sweep the musty maxims of Puffendorff and the rest into that oblivion which has happily engulphed the kindred absurdities of protection.

"I will not attempt, within the space of a letter, to touch upon the other issues involved in this deplorable civil war. There is one point only on which I will add a remark. An opinion seems to be entertained by some parties here and on the continent that it is in the power of the Governments of England and France to control, if not put an end to, the conflict. I entertain the strongest conviction, on the contrary, that any act of intervention on the part of a European power, whether by breaking the blockade, or a premature acknowledgment of the independence of the South, or in any other way, can have no other effect but to aggravate and protract the quarrel. History tells us how greatly the horrors of the French revolution sprung from the intervention of the foreigner. Were a similar element thrown in to infuriate the American contest, every restraining motive for forbearance, every thought of compromise or conciliation would be cast to the winds ; the North would avail itself of the horrible weapon always ready at hand, and by calling in the aid of the negro would carry the fire and sword of a servile war into the South, and make it a desolation and a wilderness. So far from expecting that the raw material of our great industry would reach us sooner in consequence of such an intervention, I believe the more probable result would be the destruction of the cotton plant itself throughout the Southern States of the Union.

"I cannot conclude without thanking you for your kind offer of hospitality ; and I remain, my dear sir, yours very truly,

"Rd. Cobden.

"Jno. T. Pagan, Esq., Mayor."

In replying to the toast of his health, Mr. Bright, after some preliminary remarks, said: You have, by this great kindness that you have done me on this occasion, given a proof that in the main you do not disapprove of my public labors—(cheers)—that at least you are willing to express the opinion that the motives by which I have been actuated have been honest and honorable to myself; and that that course has not been entirely without service to my country. (Cheers.) Coming to this meeting, or to any similar meeting, I always find that the subjects of discussion appear to be infinite, and far more than it is possible to treat. Now, in these times in which we live, by the inventions of the telegraph, and the steamboat, and the railroad, and the multiplication of newspapers, we seem continually to stand as on the top of an exceeding high mountain, from which we behold all the kingdoms of the earth, and all the glories of them, and unhappily not only all their glories, but their crimes, and their follies, and their calamities. Seven years ago our eyes were turned with anxious expectation to a remote corner of Europe, where five nations were contending in bloody strife for an object which possibly hardly one of them comprehended—an object, if they did comprehend it, all sensible men amongst them must have known to be absolutely impracticable. Four years ago, looking still further into the East, and we see there a gigantic revolt in a great dependency of the British crown, arising mainly from gross neglect, and from the incapacity of England up to that moment to govern a country which it had known how to conquer. Two years ago we looked south, to the plains of Lombardy, and saw a strife there in which every man in England took a strong interest, and we have welcomed as the result of that strife the addition of a new and great kingdom to the list of European States. (Hear, hear.) Now your eyes are turned in a contrary direction, and we look to the West, and there we see a struggle in progress of the very highest interest to England, and to humanity at large. We see there a nation, which I shall call the Transatlantic English nation, the inheritor and partaker of the historic glories of this nation. We see it torn with intestine broils, and suffering from calamities from which for more than a century past—in fact, for nearly two centuries past—this country has been exempt. That struggle is of especial interest to us. We remember the description which

one of our great poets gives of Rome in its condition of decay. He describes it as "Lone mother of dead empires." But England is the living mother of great nations on the American and on the Australian continent, and she promises to belt the world with her knowledge, her civilization, and even something more than the freedom that she herself enjoys. (Cheers.) Eighty-five years ago, about the time when some of our oldest townsmen were very little children, there were on the North American continent colonies, mainly of Englishmen, containing about three millions of souls. Those colonies we have seen a year ago constitute the United States of North America, and comprising a population of not less than thirty millions of souls. We know that in agriculture and in manufactures, with the exception of this kingdom, there is no country in the world which may be placed in advance with regard to those arts of the United States. With regard to inventions, I believe within the last thirty years we have received more useful inventions from the United States than we have received from all the countries of Europe. In that country there are probably ten times as many miles of telegraph as there are in this country. There are at least five or six times as many miles of railways. The tonnage of that nation, of its shipping is at least equal to ours, if it does not exceed ours. The prisons of that country—for even in countries the most favored so far, prisons are needful—the prisons of that country have been models for the other nations of Europe; and many European nations and governments have sent commissions beyond the Atlantic to inquire into the admirable systems of education established universally in their free schools throughout the free and northern States. If I were to speak of them in a religious aspect, I should say that within that period of time to which their short history goes back, there is nothing on the face of the earth, and never has been besides, to equal the magnificent arrangement of churches and ministers, and of all the appliances which are thought necessary for a nation to teach morality and Christianity to the people. Besides all this, when I state that for many years past the annual public expenditure of the government of that country has been somewhere between ten and fifteen millions, I need not perhaps say further, that there has existed in that country, amongst all the people, an amount of comfort and prosperity,

of abounding plenty, such as I believe no other country in the world, in any age, has displayed. This is a very fine, but still a very true picture, but which has another side, to which I must advert. There has been one great feature in that country—one great contrast which has been pointed to by all men who have commented upon the United States—as a feature of danger and a contrast calculated to give pain. You have had in that country the utmost liberty to the white man, but bondage and degradation to the black man. Now, rely upon it that, wherever Christianity lives and flourishes, there must grow up from it necessarily a conscience which is hostile to any oppression and any wrong; and, therefore, from the hour when the United States constitution was formed, so long as it left there this great evil, then comparatively small, but now become so great, which left there the seeds of that which an American statesman has so ably described in that irrepressible conflict of which now the whole world is witness. (Cheers.) It has been a common thing for men disposed to carp at the American States to point at this blot upon their fair fame, and to compare it with the boasted declaration of equality in their deed and declaration of independence; but we must recollect who sowed this seed of trouble, and how and by whom it has been cherished. Without dwelling upon this for more than a moment, I should like to read to you a paragraph from instructions proposed to be given to the Virginian delegates to Congress in the month of August, 1774, and from the pen of Mr. Jefferson, perhaps the ablest man produced in the United States at the time, and actively engaged in its affairs, and who was afterwards, I believe for two periods, President of the republic. He writes this from a Slave State—from the State of Virginia:—"For the most trifling reasons, and sometimes for no conceivable reason at all, his Majesty has rejected laws of the most salutary tendency. The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves, we hear it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa. Yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might amount to prohibition, have been hitherto defeated by his Majesty's

negative, thus preferring the immediate advantage of a few British corsairs to the lasting interests of the American States, and to the rights of human nature, deeply wounded by this infamous practice." (Loud cheers.) I read that merely to show that, two years before the declaration of independence was signed, Mr. Jefferson, acting on behalf of those he represented in Virginia, wrote that protest against the British Government which prevented the colonists abolishing the slave-trade, preparatory to the abolition of slavery itself. The United States constitution left the slave question for every State to manage for itself. It was a question then too difficult to settle apparently; but every man had the hope and belief that in a few years slavery would become of itself extinct. Then there happened that great event in the annals of manufactures and commerce; it was discovered that in those states that article which we in this country so much depend upon could be produced of the best quality, enough for manufacture, and at a moderate price; and, from that day to this, the growth of cotton has increased there, its consumption has increased here, and a value which no man dreamed of when Jefferson wrote that paper has been given to slaves and slave industry, and thus it has grown up to that gigantic institution which now threatens either its own overthrow, or the overthrow of that which is a million times more valued—the great Republic of the United States. (Loud cheers.) In the crisis to which we have arrived now, I say that we, after all, are as much interested in the crisis of the North, as if I was making this speech in the city of Boston or New York. The crisis which has now arrived, was inevitable; I say that the conscience of the North, never satisfied with the institution, was constantly bringing some men forward who took a more extreme view of the question, and there grew up naturally a section—it may be not a very numerous one—in favor of abolition. A great and powerful party resolved at last upon the restraining and control of slavery, so that it should not extend beyond the States and the area which it now occupies. But now, if we look at the Government of the United States, almost ever since the union, we shall find that the Southern power has been mostly dominant there. If you take six-and-thirty years after the formation of the constitution, you

will find that for thirty-two of those years every President was a Southern man; and if you take the period from 1828 until 1860, you will find that, on every election of President, the South voted in the majority. Well, we know what an election is in the United States for President. There is a most extended suffrage and there is a ballot-box. The President and the House of Representatives are elected by the same electors, and generally they are elected at the same time; and it follows, therefore, almost inevitably, that the House of Representatives is in complete accord in public policy with the President for the time being. Every four years there springs, from the vote created by the whole people, a President over that great nation. I think the world affords no finer spectacle than this. I think it affords no higher dignity, that there is no greater object of ambition on the political stage on which men are permitted to move. You may point, if you like, to hereditary royalty, to crowns coming down through successive ages in the same families, to thrones based on prescription or on conquest, to sceptres wielded over veteran legions, or subject realms; but to my mind there is nothing more worthy of reverence and obedience, nothing more sacred than the authority of the freely chosen magistrate of a great and free people. (Loud cheers.) And if there be on earth and amongst men any right divine to govern, surely it rests with the ruler so chosen and so appointed. (Cheers.) This process of a great election was gone through a year ago, and the South, that had so long been successful, found itself defeated. That defeat was followed instantly by secession, insurrection, and war. In the multitude of articles which have been brought before us in the newspapers within the last few months, I have no doubt you have seen, as I have seen, it stated, that this question was very much like that upon which the colonies originally revolted against the Crown of England. It is amusing, however, how little many newspaper writers know, and how little they think you know. (Laughter.) When the war of independence commenced in America—ninety years ago, or more—there was no representation there at all. The question was whether a ministry in Downing street, and a corrupt and boroughmongering parliament at Westminster, should impose taxes upon three millions of English sub-

jects, who had left their country and established themselves in North America. But now the question is not of under-representation, or of no representation, because, as is perfectly notorious, the representation of the South is not only complete but in excess, for in distributing the number of representatives to the number of people, which is done every ten years in the United States, three out of every five slaves are counted for the South, as if they were white men and free men, and the number of members given to them is so much greater than it would be if the really free men and white men only were counted ; and it has followed from that that the South has had in the House of Representatives about twenty members more than it ought in right to have, upon the principle upon which members were apportioned to the Northern and the Free States. Therefore, you will see that there is no kind of comparison between the state of things when the colonies revolted and the state of things now, when this fearful and wicked insurrection has broken out. But there is another cause which is sometimes in England assigned for this great misfortune, which is the protective theories in operation in the United States, and the maintenance of the high tariff. It happens in regard to this that no American, certainly no one I ever met with, attributes the disaster to the Union to that cause. It is an argument made use of by ignorant Englishmen, but never by informed Americans. Have not I already shown you that the South during almost the whole existence of the Union has been dominant at Washington? and during that period the tariff has existed. There has been dissatisfaction occasionally with it, there can be no doubt, and at times the tariff has been higher than was thought just, or reasonable, or necessary, by some of the States of the South. But the very first act of the United States which levies duties on imports—passed immediately after the Union was formed—recites that it is necessary for the encouragement and protection of manufactures to levy the duties "which follow;" and during the war with England, from 1812 to 1815, the people of the United States had to pay for all the articles they brought from Europe many times over the natural cost of those articles, on account of the interruption of the traffic by the English nation; and when the war was

over, it was felt by everybody desirable that they should encourage manufactures in their own country; and seeing that England was at that precise moment passing a law to prevent any wheat coming from America until wheat in England had risen to the price of 84s. per quarter, we may feel quite satisfied that the doctrines of protection originally entertained did not find the slightest favor at the close of the war in 1815. Now, there is one remarkable point with regard to this matter which should not be forgotten: Twelve months ago, at the meeting of the Congress of the United States, which is held on the first Monday in December, there were various proposals made, and committee meetings of various kinds held, to try and devise some mode of settling the question between the North and South, so that the disunion might not go on; but though I read carefully everything that was published in the English newspapers from the United States on that side, I do not recollect that in any single instance the question of the tariff was referred to, or that any change was proposed or suggested in that matter as likely to have any effect upon the question of secession. Now, there is another point, too: That whatever be the influence of tariffs upon the United States, it is as pernicious to the West as to the South; and further, Louisiana, which is a Southern State, and a seceded State, has always voted along with Pennsylvania, and, until last year, in favor of protection for its sugar; whilst Pennsylvania wished protection for its coal and iron. If the tariff was onerous and grievous, was that a reason for this great insurrection? Has there ever a country had a tariff—especially in the article of food—more onerous and more cruel than that which we had in this country, twenty years ago? (Cheers.) We did not secede. We did not rebel. What we did was to raise money for the purpose of distributing to all the people of this country perfect information upon that question; and many men, as you know, devoted all their labors for several years to teach the great and wise doctrines of free trade to the people of England. Why, the price of a single gunboat, the keep of a single regiment, the garrison of a single fort, the cessation of their trade for a single day, costs more than it would have cost

them to spread all over the intelligent people of the United States the most complete statement of the whole question ; and West and South, having no interest in protection, could unitedly have revised, or if need had been, could have repealed the tariff altogether. No ; the question is a very different affair—a more grave question. It is the question of slavery. (Hear, hear.) For thirty years it has been constantly coming to the surface, disturbing social life, and overthrowing almost all political harmony in the working of the United States. In the North there is no secession, there is no collision ; but this disturbance and this insurrection was found wholly in the South, and in the Slave States ; therefore, I think the man who says otherwise, and who contends that it is the tariff, or anything whatsoever other than slavery, is either himself deceived, or he endeavors to deceive others. The object of the South is this : To escape from the majority which wishes to limit the area of slavery. (Hear, hear.) They wish to found a Slave State, free from the influences and the opinions of freedom. The Free States in the North, therefore, now stand before the world the advocates and defenders of freedom and civilization. The Slave States of the South offer themselves for the recognition of Christian nations based upon the foundation, the unchangeable foundation in their eyes, of slavery and barbarism. (Hear, hear.) I will not discuss the guilt of men who, ministers of a great nation, only last year conspired to overthrow it. I will not point out or recapitulate the statements of the fraudulent manner in which they disposed of the funds in the national exchequer. I will not point out by name any of the men in this conspiracy, whom history will designate by titles that they won't like to hear ; but I say that slavery has sought to break up the most free government in the world, and to found a new State in this 19th century, whose corner stone is the perpetual bondage of millions of men. (Hear, hear.) Having thus described what appears to me briefly the little truth of this matter, what is the course that England would be expected to pursue ? We should be neutral so far as regards mingling in the strife. We were neutral in the strife in Italy, but we were not neutral in opinion, or in sympaty. (Hear, hear.) But you know perfectly well that throughout the whole of Italy, at this moment, there

is a feeling that, though no shot was fired from an English ship, though no English soldier trod their soil, the opinion of England was potent in Europe, and did much for the creation of the Italian kingdom. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the United States, you know how much we hate slavery—that is, awhile ago you thought you knew that we had given £20,000,000, that is a million a year nearly in taxes, to free 800,000 slaves in the English colonies. You know, or you thought you knew, how much you were in love with free government everywhere, although it might not take precisely the form of our government—free government in Italy, free government in Switzerland, free government, under republican forms, in the United States of America; and with all this every man would have said that England would wish the American Union to be prosperous and eternal. Now, suppose we turn our eyes to the East, to the Empire of Russia, for a moment. In Russia, as you know, there has been one of the most important and magnificent changes of policy ever seen in any country within the last year or two. The present Emperor of Russia, following the wishes of his father, has insisted upon the abolition of serfdom in that empire—(hear, hear)—and twenty-three millions of human beings, lately serfs, little better than real slaves, have been put in a path of elevation to the ranks of freedom. (Cheers.) Now, suppose that the millions of serfs of Russia had been chiefly in the south of Russia. We hear that the nobles of Russia, to whom these serfs belong in a great measure, have been very hostile to this change, and that there has ever been some danger that the peace of that empire might be disturbed during these changes. Suppose these nobles, for the purpose of maintaining in perpetuity the serfdom of Russia, and barring out twenty-three millions of their fellow-creatures from the rights of freedom, had established a great and secret conspiracy, and had risen in a great and dangerous insurrection against the Russian Government, I say that the people of England, although but seven years ago they were in mortal combat with Russia, in the south of Europe—I believe that at this moment they would have prayed Heaven in all sincerity and fervor to give strength to the arm and success to the good wishes of the Emperor, and that that vile and pernicious insurrection

might be suppressed. (Applause.) Now, let us look a little at what has been said and done in this country since the period when Parliament rose in the beginning of August. There have been two speeches to which I wish to refer in terms of approbation. The Duke of Argyle, a member of the present government—and though I have not the smallest personal acquaintance with him, I am free to say I believe him to be one of the most intelligent and liberal of his order—(hear, hear)—the Duke of Argyle delivered a speech which was fair and friendly to the Government of the United States. Lord Stanley—(hear)—only a fortnight ago made a speech which it is impossible to read without remarking the thought, the liberality, and the wisdom by which it is distinguished. He doubted, it is true, whether the Union could be restored—but a man need not be hostile, and must not necessarily be friendly, to doubt that or the contrary—but he spoke with fairness and friendliness of the Government of the United States, and he said they were right and justifiable in the course they took—(hear)—and he gave a piece of advice, now more important than at the moment when he gave it, that in the various incidents and accidents of a struggle of this nature, it became a people like this to be very moderate and calm, and to avoid getting into that feeling of irritation which sometimes arises and sometimes leads to danger. (Hear, hear.) I mention these two speeches as from noblemen of great distinction in this country—speeches which I believe would have a beneficial effect on the other side of the Atlantic. Lord John Russell, in the House of Commons, during the last session, made a speech, too, in which he rebuked the impertinence of a young member of the House of Commons, who spoke about the bursting of the bubble republic. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) It was a speech worthy of the best days of Lord John Russell. (Cheers.) At a later period he spoke at Newcastle, on an occasion something like this, when the inhabitants, or some portion of the inhabitants of that town, invited him to a public dinner. He described the contest in words something like these (I speak only from memory): "That the North is contending for empire, and the South for independence." Did he mean that the North was contending for empire, as England when making some fresh conquest? If he meant that, what he said was not true.

But I recollect Lord John Russell, in the House of Commons some years ago, on an occasion when I had made some observations as to the unreasonable expenditure of the colonies, and complained that the people of England should be taxed to defray the expenses which the colonies themselves were well able to defray, turned to me, with a sharpness which was not necessary, and said, "The honorable member has no objection to make a great empire into a small one, but I have." Perhaps if he lived in the United States, if he were a member of the Senate or House of Representatives there, he would doubt whether it was his duty to consent at once to the destruction of a great country; to its separation, it may be, into two hostile camps; or whether he would not try what means were open to him, and would be open to the government, to avert such an unlooked for and dire calamity. There were other speeches that have been made. I will not refer to them by any quotation. I will not, out of pity to some of the men who have uttered them—(laughter)—I will not bring their names even before you, or give to them an endurance which I hope they will not have—(hear, hear)—but I will leave them in that obscurity which they so richly merit. (Laughter) But now you know as well as I do, that of all the speeches made at the end of the session of Parliament by public men and politicians, the majority of them displayed either strange ignorance of American affairs or a strange absence of that cordiality and friendship which, I maintain, our American kinsmen have a right to look for at our hands. (Hear, hear.) And if we part from the speaker and turn to the writers, what do we find there? We find that that journal which is reputed abroad, and has hitherto been reputed at home, as the most powerful representative of English opinion, at least of the richer classes—we find that in that very newspaper there has not been, since Mr. Lincoln took office in March last, as President of the United States, one fair, and honorable, and friendly article on American affairs in its columns. (Hear, hear.) Some of you, I dare say, read it—(laughter)—but fortunately now every district is so admirably supplied with local newspapers, that I trust in all times to come the people of England will drink of purer streams nearer home—(cheers and laughter)—and not of streams which are mudded

by party feeling, political intrigue, and by many motives that tend to anything rather than the enlightenment and advantage of the people. (Hear, hear.) Now, it is said—why this war? Why not separate peaceably? Why this fratricidal strife? I hope they will all be against fratricidal strife in every respect. If it be true that God has made of one blood all the families of man to dwell on the face of all the earth, it must be a fratricidal strife whether we are slaughtering Russians in the Crimea, or bombarding the towns on the seacoast of the United States. (Hear, hear.) Now, no one will expect that I should stand forward as the advocate of war, or the defender of that great sum of all crime which is involved in war; but when you are discussing a question of this nature it is only fair you should discuss it upon principles which are acknowledged not only in the country where the strife is being carried on, but universally acknowledged in this country. When I discussed the question of the Russian war seven or eight years ago, I always discussed it on the principles which were avowedly those of the government of the people of England, and I took my texts from the blue books which were presented before me. I take the liberty of doing that now in this case. I say that, looking at the principles avowed in England, and at all its policy, there is no man, that is not absolutely a non-resistant in every sense, who can fairly challenge the conduct of the American Government in this war. It is a curious thing to find that the party in this country which on every public question is in favor of war at any cost, when it comes to speak of the duty of the Government of the United States, is in favor of peace at any price. (Hear.) I want to know whether it has ever been admitted by politicians and statesmen that great nations can be broken up at any time by the will of any particular section of those nations? It has been tried occasionally in Ireland—(laughter)—and if it had succeeded, history would have said with very good cause. (Hear, hear.) But if anybody tries now to get up a secession or insurrection in Ireland, it would be less disturbing in everything than the secession in the United States, because there is a boundary which nobody can dispute. I am quite sure the *Times* newspaper would have sent a special correspondent, who would have described, glowingly and exultingly, the manner in

which the Irish insurrectionists were cut down and made an end of. Let any man try in this country to restore the Heptarchy. Do you think that any minister in this country would think it a thing to be tolerated for a moment? But if you will look at the map of the United States, you will see that there is no country in the world, probably at this moment, where any plan of separation between North and South, as far as the question of boundary is concerned, is so surrounded with insurmountable difficulties. For example: Maryland is a Slave State, but Maryland has, by a very large majority, voted for the Union. Would Maryland go North, or South? Kentucky is a Slave State, and one of the finest States in the Union, and containing a fine people. Kentucky has voted for the Union, and has been invaded from the South. Missouri is a Slave State. Missouri has not seceded, but has been invaded from the South, and there is a secession party in that State. There are parts of Virginia which form themselves into a new State, resolving to adhere to the North; and there is no doubt a considerable Northern and Union feeling in the State of Tennessee; and I have no doubt that there is in every other State;—indeed, I am not sure that there is not now within the sound of my voice a citizen of the United States—(hear)—a citizen of the State of Alabama, who can tell you that there the question of secession has never been put to the vote, and that there are great numbers of most reasonable and thoughtful, just, men in the State, who entirely deplore the condition of things there existing. Well, then, what would you do with all these States, and with what may be called the loyal portion of the population of these States? Would you allow them to be dragooned into this insurrection, and into the formation of a new State, to which they themselves are hostile? But what would you do with the city of Washington? Washington is in a Slave State. Would anybody have advised President Lincoln and his cabinet, and the members of Congress, of the House of Representatives and Senate from the North, with their wives and children, and everybody else who was not in favor of the South, that they should set off on their melancholy pilgrimage northward, leaving a capital hallowed by such associations, having its name from the father of their country,—would you say that they

should travel northward, and leave Washington to the South because Washington was situated in a Slave State? Again, what do you say to the Mississippi River? Have you seen it on the map—the father of waters—rolling that gigantic stream to the ocean; do you think the fifty millions who will one day occupy the banks of that river to the northward—do you think that they would consent that that great stream should roll through a foreign, and, it might be, a hostile state? (Hear, hear, and cheers.) And more, there are four millions of negroes in subjection. For them the American Union is directly responsible. They are not secessionists. They are now, as they always were, legally, not subjects nor citizens, but under the care and power of the Government of the United States. Would you consent that these should be delivered up to the tender mercies of their taskmasters, the defenders of slavery, as an everlasting institution? Well, if all had been surrendered without a struggle, what then? What would the writers in this newspaper, and other newspapers, have said? If a bare rock in your empire, that would not keep a single goat alive, be touched by any foreign power, why, the whole empire is aroused to resistance. And if there be, from accident or from passion, the smallest insult to your flag, what do your newspaper writers say on the subject, and what is said in all your towns, and on all your exchanges? I will tell you what they would have said if the government of the United States and the North had taken their insidious and dishonest advice. They would have said that the great republic is a failure, that democracy has murdered patriotism, that history affords no example of such meanness or such cowardice, and they would have heaped unmeasured obloquy and contempt upon the people and the government that had taken that course. Well, but they tell you—these candid friends of the United States—they tell you that all freedom is gone, that the Habeas Corpus Act, if they ever had one, is known no longer, and that any man may be arrested at the dictum of the President or the Secretary of State. In 1848 you recollect, many of you, that there was a small insurrection in Ireland. It was an absurd thing altogether; but what was done then? Why, I saw in one night in the House of Commons a bill for the suspension of the Habeas

Corpus Act pass through all its stages. What more did I see? I saw a bill brought in by the Whig government of that day, Lord John Russell being premier, which made speaking against the government and against the crown, which up to that time had been sedition, felony, and it was only by the greatest exertion of a few members that that act, with that particular, was limited to a period of two years. In the same session, a bill was brought in, called an Alien Act, which empowered the Home Secretary to take any foreigner whatsoever, not a naturalized Englishman, and in twenty-four hours to send him out of the country; and although a man might have committed no crime, this might be done to him apparently on suspicion. But suppose that an insurgent army had been so near London that you could see its outposts from every suburb of London, what then do you think would have been the regard of the Government of Great Britain for personal liberty if it interfered with the necessity, and, as they might think, the salvation of the State? (Hear.) I recollect, in 1848, when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, that a number of persons in Liverpool, men there of position and wealth, presented a petition to the House of Commons praying—what? That the Habeas Corpus Act should not be suspended? No; they were not content with having it suspended in Ireland, they prayed the House of Commons to extend the suspension to Liverpool. (Laughter.) I recollect at that time—I am sure my friend Mr. Wilson will bear me out in what I say—that the Mayor of Liverpool telegraphed to the Mayor of Manchester, and messages were sent to London nearly every hour. The Mayor of Manchester heard from the Mayor of Liverpool that certain Irishmen in Liverpool, conspirators and fellow-conspirators with those in Ireland, were going to burn the cotton warehouses of Liverpool and the cotton mills of Lancashire. (Laughter.) I took that petition from the table of the House of Commons and read it, and handed it over to a statesman of great eminence, who has but just been removed from among us—a man not second to any in the House of Commons for his knowledge of affairs and great capacity—I refer to the late Sir James Graham. I handed to him this petition; he read it, and after he read it he rose from his seat and laid it on the table with a gesture of abhorrence

and disgust. (Hear, hear.) Now, that was a petition from the town of Liverpool, in which some persons had been making themselves ridiculous by their conduct in this matter. (Cheers.) There is one more point I will allude to. It has been said how much better it would be, not for the United States, but for us, if these states should be divided. I recollect meeting a gentleman in Bond street before the session was over one day—a rich man, whose voice is very much heard on the opposite side to that on which I sit in the House of Commons—but whose voice is not heard when on his legs but when he is cheering other speakers. (Laughter.) He said to me, "This is, after all, a sad business about the United States; but still I think it is much better that they should be split up. In twenty years (or fifty, I forget which it was he said) they will be so powerful that they will bully all Europe." And a distinguished member of the House of Commons, distinguished there for his eloquence, distinguished more by his many writings—I mean Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton—he did not exactly express the hope, but he ventured on something like a prediction that the time would come when there would be as many republics and states in America as you can count upon your fingers. Now, there cannot be a meaner motive than this motive that I am now speaking of in forming a judgment on this question—that it is better for us, for the people of England, or the Government of England, that the United States should be severed, and that that continent should be, like the continent of Europe, in many states, subject to the contentions and disasters which have accompanied the history of the states of Europe. I should say that if a man had a great heart within him he would rather look forward to the day when, from that point of land that is habitable nearest the pole to the shores of the great gulf, the whole of the vast continent might become one great federation of states, that, without a great army, without a great navy, not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics, without custom-houses inside throughout the length and breadth of its territory, but with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law everywhere, peace everywhere, it would afford at last some hope that men were not forsaken of Heaven, and that the future of our race might be

better than the past. (Loud cheers.) It is a common observation that our friends in America are very irritable. I think that is very likely, as to a considerable number of them, to be quite true. Our friends in America are in a great struggle. There is nothing like it before in their history. No country in the world was ever more entitled, in my opinion, to the sympathy and forbearance of all friendly countries than are the United States at this moment. (Hear.) They have their newspapers that are no wiser than ours. (Laughter.) They have there some newspapers, one at least, which, up to the election of Mr. Lincoln, were his bitterest and unrelenting foes. When the war broke out it was not safe to take the line of Southern support, and they were obliged to turn round in support of the prevalent opinions of the country. But they undertook to serve the South in another way, and that was by exaggerating every difficulty and misstating every fact, if that could serve their object of creating distrust between the people of the Northern States and the people of this United Kingdom. If the *Times* in this country has done all that it could to poison the minds of the people of England, and to irritate the minds of the people of America, the *New York Herald*, I am sorry to say, has done, I think, all that it could, or all that it dared, to provoke mischief between the Government of Washington and the Government in London. (Cheers.) There is one thing which I must state where I think they have a solid reason to complain. I am very sorry to have to mention it, because it blames our present foreign minister, against whom I am not anxious to say a word, and recollecting his speech in the House of Commons, I should be slow to conclude that he had any feelings hostile to the United States Government. (Hear, hear.) You recollect that, during the session, on the 14th May, a proclamation came out which acknowledged the South as a belligerent power, and proclaimed the neutrality of England. A little time before that, I forget how many days, Mr. Dallas, the last minister from the United States, had left London for Liverpool and America. He did not wish to undertake any affairs connected with the government by which he had not been appointed, the government of Mr. Lincoln, but to leave what had to be done to his successor, who was on his way, and whose arrival was

daily expected. Mr. Adams, the present minister from the United States, is a man, if he lived in England, you would say was one of the noblest families of the country. I think that his father and his grandfather were Presidents of the United States. His grandfather was one of the great men who achieved the independence of the United States. There is no family in that country having more claims upon what I should call the veneration and affection of the people than the family of Mr. Adams. Mr. Adams arrived in London on the night of the 13th of May. On the 14th that proclamation to which I have alluded was issued. It was known he was coming: he was not consulted; it was not delayed for a day, though nothing pressed, that he might be notified about it. If communications of a friendly nature had taken place with him, and with the American Government, they could have found no fault with this, because it was almost inevitable before the struggle had proceeded far that this proclamation would be issued. I have the very best reasons for knowing that there is no single thing that has happened during the course of these events that has created more surprise, more irritation, and more distrust in the United States with respect to this country, than the fact that that proclamation did not wait even one single day till the minister from America could come here, and till it could have been done with his consent and concurrence, and in that friendly manner that would have avoided all the unpleasantness that has occurred. (Cheers.) I am obliged to say—and I say it with the utmost pain—that without this country doing things which were hostile to the North, and without men expressing affection for slavery, and outward and open hatred for the Union, I say there has not been here that cordial and friendly neutrality which, if I had been a citizen of the United States, I should have expected. (Hear, hear.) And I say further, that if there has existed considerable irritation at that, that must be taken as a measure of the high appreciation which the people of those States place upon the opinion of the people of England. (Hear, hear.) If I had been addressing this audience ten days ago, so far as I know, I should have said just what I have said now. And, although there has been an un-

toward event, and circumstances are somewhat or even considerably altered, yet I have thought it desirable to make this statement, with the view, as far as I am able to do it, to improve the opinion in England, and to assuage, if there be any, the feelings of irritation in America, so that no further difficulties may arise in the progress of this unhappy strife. (Cheers.) But there has occurred an event which has been announced to us only a week ago, which is one of great importance, and it may be one of some peril. It is asserted that what is called international law has been broken by the seizure of the Southern commissioners on board an English trading steamer by a steamer of war of the United States. What is maritime law? You have heard that the opinion of the law officers of the crown is in favor of this view of the case—that the law has been broken. I am not at all going to say that it has not. It would be imprudent in me to state my opinion on a legal question that I have only partially examined against their opioion on a question which I presume they have carefully examined; but this I say, that maritime law is not to be found in any act of Parliament; it is not in so many clauses. You know it is difficult to find the law. I can ask the mayor and other magistrates whether it is not difficult to find the law when they have found the act of Parliament, and found the clause; but when there is no act of Parliament and no clause you may imagine that the case is still more difficult. (Laughter.) Now, maritime law, international law, consists of opinions and precedents. For the most it is most unsettled; the opinions are the opinions of men of different countries, given at different times; the precedents are not always like each other; the law is very unsettled, and for the most part I believe it to be exceedingly bad. Now, in past times, as you know from the histories you read, this country has been a fighting country. We have been belligerents, and as belligerents we have carried maritime law by our own hand to a pitch that has been oppressive to foreign, and particularly to neutral nations. Now, for the first time in our history, almost for the last two hundred years, we are not belligerents, but neutrals, and therefore we are disposed, perhaps, to take rather a different view of maritime and international law. The act which has been com-

mitted by the American steamer, in my opinion, whether it is legal or not, is both impolitic and bad. (Hear, hear.) That is my opinion. I think it will turn out, and is almost certain, that so far as the taking of those men from that ship was concerned, it was wholly unknown to and unauthorized by the American Government; and that if the American Government believes, on the opinion of its law officers, that the act is illegal, I have no doubt that they will make fitting reparation—(applause)—for there is no government in the world that has so strenuously insisted upon the modification of international law, and been so anxious to be guided always by the most moderate and merciful interpretation of that law. (Cheers.) Our great adviser, the *Times* newspaper, has been persuading the people that this is but one of a series of acts which denote the determination of the Washington government to pick a quarrel with the people of England. Did you ever know anybody who was not very nearly dead-drunk, who, having as much upon his hands as he could manage, would offer to fight every body about him. (Laughter.) Do you believe that the United States Government, presided over by President Lincoln, so constitutional in all his acts, so moderate as he has been, representing at this moment that great party in the United States, happily now in the ascendency, which has always been speaking in favor of peace, and speaking in favor of England—(hear, hear)—do you belive that that government, having upon its hands now an insurrection of the most formidable character in the South, would invite the armies and the fleets of England to combine with that insurrection, and it might be so to exasperate the struggle as to render it impossible that the Union should ever again be restored? (Hear, hear.) I say that single statement, whether it come from a public writer or a public speaker, is enough to stamp him for ever with the character of being an insidious enemy of both countries. (Cheers.) Now, what have we seen during the last week? People have not been, I am told—I have not seen much of it—quite so calm as sensible men should be. Here is a question of law. I will undertake to say that when you hear from the United States Government (if they think the act legal), when you have a statement of their view of the case, they will show you that fifty years ago, during the war at

that time there were scores of cases that were at least as bad as this, and some infinitely worse. If it were not so late at night, and I am not anxious now to go into this question further, I could easily place before you cases of wonderful outrage committed by us when we were at war, and many for which, I am afraid, little or no reparation was offered. But let us bear this in mind, that during this struggle, incidents and accidents will happen. Bear in mind the advice of Lord Stanley, so opportune and so judicious. Don't let your newspapers, or your public speakers, or any man take you off your guard, and bring you into that frame of mind under which your government, if it desires war, can have it with the public assent, or if it does not desire war may be driven to engage in it, for one may be as fatal and as evil as the other. What can be now more monstrous than that we, who call ourselves to some extent an educated, a moral, and Christian nation, the moment that any accident of this kind occurs, before we have made a representation to the American Government, before we have had a word from them in reply, are all up in arms, every sword is leaping from its scabbard, and every man is looking out for his pistols and his blunderbuss. Why, I think the conduct pursued,—and I have no doubt it is pursued by a certain class in America just the same,—is much more the conduct of savages than of Christianized and civilized men. (Hear.) No! Let us be calm. You recollect how we were dragged into the Russian war—(cheers)—drifted into it. You know that I, at least, have not upon my head any guilt of that fearful war. (Cheers.) You know that it cost a hundred millions of money to this country, that it cost at least the lives of 40,000 Englishmen, that it disturbed your trade, that it nearly doubled the armies of Europe, that it placed the relations of Europe on a much less peaceful footing than before, and that it did not effect one single thing of all those that it was promised to effect. (Applause.) I recollect speaking within the last two years to a man whose name I have already mentioned, Sir James Graham, in the House of Commons. He was a minister at the time of that war. He was reminding me of a severe onslaught which I had made on him and Lord Palmerston for attending a dinner at the Reform Club when Sir C. Napier was appointed to command the fleet

in the Baltic; and he remarked what a thrashing I had given them in the House. I said, "Sir James, tell me candidly, didn't you deserve it?" He said, "Well, you were entirely right about that war; we were entirely wrong, and we never should have gone into it." (Applause.) This is exactly what everybody will say if you go into a war about this business, when it is over; when your sailors and your soldiers, so many of them as may be slaughtered, are gone to their last account; when your taxes are increased, your business permanently, it may be, injured, and imbittered feelings for generations created between America and England. Then your statesmen will tell you that we ought not to have gone into the war. But they will very likely say, as many of them tell me, "What could we do in the frenzy of the public mind?" Let them not add to the frenzy, and let us be careful that nobody drives us into that frenzy. (Hear, hear.) Again, I say, remembering the past, remembering at this moment the perils of a friendly people, seeing the difficulties by which they are surrounded, let us, I entreat of you, see if there be any real moderation in the people of England, and if magnanimity, so often to be found amongst individuals, is not absolutely wanting in a great nation. (Hear, hear.) Government may discuss this matter. They may arrange it. They may arbitrate it. I have received here since I came into the room a despatch from a friend of mine in London referring to this matter. I believe some portion of it is in the papers this evening. He states that General Scott, whom you knew by name, who has come over from America to France, being in a bad state of health, the general lately of the American armies, and a man of reputation in that country hardly second to that which the Duke of Wellington held during his lifetime in this country—General Scott has written a letter on the American difficulty. He denies that the Washington Cabinet had ordered the seizure of the Southern Commissioners, even if under the protection of a neutral flag. As to Slidell and Mason being or not being contraband, the general answers for it that if Mr. Seward cannot satisfy Earl Russell that they bore that character Earl Russell will be able to convince Mr. Seward that they were not. He pledges himself, that if this government cordially agree with

that of the United States in establishing the immunity of neutrals from the oppressive right of search and seizure on suspicion, the Cabinet of Washington will not hesitate to purchase such a boon to peaceful trading vessels. (Cheers.) Before I sit down I must ask you, What is this people, about which so many men in England at this moment are writing and speaking, and thinking with harshness—I think with injustice—if not with great bitterness? Two centuries ago multitudes of the people of this country found a refuge on the North American continent, escaping from the tyranny of the Stuarts and from the bigotry of Laud. Many noble spirits from our country endeavored to establish great experiments in favor of human freedom on that continent. Bancroft, the greatest historian of his own country, has said, in his graphic and emphatic language, "The history of the colonization of America is the history of the crimes of Europe." From that time down to our own period America has admitted the wanderers from every clime. Since 1815, the time which many here remember, and which is within my lifetime, more than three millions of persons have emigrated from the United Kingdom to the United States. During the fifteen years from 1845 or 1846 to 1859 or 1860—a time so recent that we all remember the most trivial circumstances and events that have happened in that time—during those fifteen years more than 2,320,000 persons left the shores of the United Kingdom as emigrants for the States of North America. (Hear, hear.) At this very moment, then, there are millions in the United States who personally, or whose parents have at one time been citizens of this country with persons, some of the oldest of these whom I am now addressing. They found a home in the far West. They subdued the wilderness. They met with plenty there, which was not afforded them in their native country, and they are become a great people. There may be those persons in England who are jealous of the States. There may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic. There may even be those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South. But of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross, or calumny the most wicked, can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren be-

yond the Atlantic. (Applause.) Whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South will achieve an unhonored independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know, that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of free men in the North will be thirty millions or fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said among them that in the darkest hour of their country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness, and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of her children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country. But if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name.

The honorable gentleman resumed his seat amid great cheering, having spoken for an hour and forty minutes.

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